

Thad Carhart

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Nationality: American

Occupation: Novelist

Thad Carhart

#### WRITINGS:

The Piano Shop on the Left Bank (memoir), Random House (New York, NY), 2001.

Across the Endless River, Doubleday (New York, NY), 2009.

Contributor to periodicals.

Writer. Apple Computer, former head of communications of European division.

Married; wife's name Simo; children: two. Education: Yale University, B.A.; Stanford University, graduate studies. Addresses: Home: Paris, France.

#### "Sidelights"

Thad Carhart, formerly an executive with Apple computer, is a freelance writer living in Paris, France. Carhart spent his childhood in San Francisco and France, and he met and married his Italian wife in San Francisco. When they decided to relocate to Europe, they chose Paris, where they have lived ever since, and where they are raising their family.

In an interview for Paris through Expatriate Eyes online, Terrance Gelenter asked Carhart if living in Paris has had an effect on his work. Carhart said: "Strangely enough, I think the fact that I walk a lot has a big effect on my writing. In Paris, you really can walk; in fact you'd be crazy to try to drive to get anywhere in the city on a daily basis. But the scale is manageable, especially with the metro, and the people watching is terrific. There are some remarkable faces, and every face has a story for me."

Carhart has contributed to a number of publications, and The Piano Shop on the Left Bank is his first book, called a "warmhearted, intelligent insight into a private Paris" by a Publishers Weekly contributor. It is a sharing of Carhart's discovery of Desforges Pianos, a tiny shop in his neighborhood. Upon entering, one can pass through a narrow hallway that leads to a glass-ceilinged atelier and a space where pianos are reconditioned before being sold. When Carhart first met Luc, the proprietor, his requests to see the pianos went unheeded, and he was finally told that in order to buy one, he first had to provide a reference from someone who had already done so.

After securing such a reference from the parent of one his daughter's friends, Carhart was allowed to examine the range of pianos in various states of repair, each coming with its own distinct history. Luc suggested a Viennese baby grand piano produced by Stingl in the 1930s, which the author bought. Carhart has changed the name of the shop and the proprietor so that the establishment will not become a tourist destination as a result of the book.

Carhart recalls his experience playing piano as a child and his rediscovery of that joy as a middle-aged man. He writes of the customers who frequent the shop and of Luc's loving restoration of each piano that comes into it. He provides a chapter about the music school where Debussy taught, and he recounts various side trips, including one to Sicily, where he visited Paolo Fazioli, a creator of contemporary pianos. Richard Eder wrote in the New York Times Book Review that Carhart "describes a master class with the Hungarian Gyorgy Sebok in a fashion that makes the account itself a work of art. ... It is the other things that make this a book about France as well as pianos. As Mr. Carhart goes back again and again, the voices of dozens of old instruments alternating with Luc's, the visits become a seminar, an apprenticeship, and gradually an initiation."

Reviewing *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, Katie Hafner wrote in the New York Times Book Review that "we are fortunate that Carhart has given us a glimpse into a rarefied world. The reverence with which he writes about this instrument will bring shame to those who once took lessons and now neglect their pianos, or use them as very large picture-frame stands. And who knows? *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank* might just tickle an impulse to lift the fall board and renew an old acquaintance." Booklist reviewer Alan Hirsch commented: "Curl up with this book on a sunny afternoon and observe the denizens of this melodious corner of Paris."

In Carhart's next work, *Across the Endless River*, he imaginatively expands on the story of Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau, the son of Shoshone woman Sacagawea and a French trapper. As a baby he accompanied his parents on the Lewis and Clark expedition, for which Sacagawea served as a guide. Half Native American and half French, Jean-Baptiste grew up between cultures. He traveled across Europe and met his wife, an Irish woman named Maura Hennesy, before returning to the United States. In *Across the Endless River*, Carhart dramatizes what little historical information is known about Charbonneau.

Reviewing the work, Historical Novels contributor Margaret Donsbach lauded: "With the historical record providing only a bare outline of the real Baptiste's life, Carhart has freely imagined people and incidents which endow his Baptiste with a quiet life of deep meaning." David M. Kinchen, a contributor to *Huntington News*, commented: "Carhart is a skilled and graceful writer." Kinchen also remarked: *Across the Endless River* should appeal to lovers of history and historical novels alike. The author is preaching to the choir in my case: I'm a fan of well-crafted, believable historical novels." Library Journal contributor Douglas Southard stated: "Fans of historical fiction with a romantic story line, such as the novels of Anya Seton, should enjoy this." A contributor to *Kirkus Reviews* claimed that the work "sensitively compares and contrasts the Old World with the New."

#### Further Readings

#### BOOKS

Carhart, Thaddeus, *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, Random House (New York, NY), 2001.

#### PERIODICALS

Booklist, March 1, 2001, Alan Hirsch, review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, p. 1216.

Kirkus Reviews, July 15, 2009, review of *Across the Endless River*.

Library Journal, February 15, 2001, Barry Zaslow, review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, p. 170; August 1, 2009, Douglas Southard, review of *Across the Endless River*, p. 66.

New York Times Book Review, May 14, 2001, Richard Elder, review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, p. 6; June 10, 2001, Katie Hafner, review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, p. 25.

Publishers Weekly, January 8, 2001, review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*, p. 54; July 13, 2009, review of *Across the Endless River*, p. 35.

#### ONLINE

BookSense.com, <http://www.booksense.com/> (February 4, 2004), Gavin J. Grant, interview with Carhart.

Historical Novels, <http://www.historicalnovels.info/> (October 14, 2009), author interview; (December 1, 2010), Margaret Donsbach, review of *Across the Endless River*.

Huntington News, <http://www.huntingtonnews.net/> (December 2, 2009), David M. Kinchen, review of *Across the Endless River*.

MusiciansNews.com, <http://www.musiciansnews.com/> (February 4, 2004), review of *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank*.

Paris through Expatriate Eyes, <http://www.paris-expat.com/> (February 4, 2004), Terrance Gelenter, interview with Carhart.

Thad Carhart Home Page, <http://www.thadcarhart.com> (December 5, 2010).\*

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